



Building Missouri's future...by degrees

TO: A+ Participating Postsecondary Institutions

FROM: Leroy Wade
Assistant Commissioner

DATE: October 14, 2011

SUBJECT: Implementation of A+ Tuition Cap

During the past several weeks, the Missouri Department of Higher Education has fielded questions and concerns from A+ participating institutions about the implementation of the tuition cap incorporated into the new administrative rule for the scholarship component of the A+ program.

The tuition cap was implemented upon recommendation from the governor's A+ workgroup and was designed to equalize awards across types of institutions and as a cost control measure. The cap limits payments under the program to the standard tuition rate charged by Linn State Technical College, which for the current year is \$149 per credit hour. For clock hour institutions, this rate translates to \$4 per clock hour based on the standard clock to credit hour conversion formula specified by the United States Department of Education. The administrative rule provides for a waiver of the cap by the MDHE on a program by program basis for programs that are more costly to deliver and that have high student and employer demand.

The primary issue being raised by participating institutions relates to the timing of the implementation of this provision. The MDHE originally provided guidance that the tuition limit would become effective with the fall 2011 semester. However, because many students and families did not receive timely notification of the changes, implementation during this fall has caused disruption and hardship for students beginning their education in programs with tuition costs that exceed the new limit.

To address this issue, the MDHE has decided to allow full tuition reimbursement for the fall 2011 semester. The tuition limitation will go into effect beginning with the start of the spring 2012 semester or the first payment period that begins after January 1, 2012. It is the department's belief that this amendment will significantly reduce confusion and disruption and will provide additional time for participating institutions to inform students of the new limit and for students and families to prepare for this transition.

There also is a related issue regarding the implementation of the limit for students enrolled in continuous enrollment (non-semester based) programs. The MDHE has consistently

communicated its willingness to work with schools on an individual student basis to minimize the disruption for students that began these programs prior to the implementation of the cap. We want to underscore our flexibility in this regard and clarify that this effort will now include any student that starts this type of program prior to the January 1, 2012, deadline. Payments for students that start a continuous enrollment program prior to January 1, 2012, may be reimbursed at a higher rate, based on agreement between the MDHE and the participating school. Institutions may request an agreement by submitting a roster of affected students that includes student name, program, tuition amount and expected completion date to one of the MDHE staff listed below. Payments for students beginning programs after January 1, 2012, will be subject to the tuition cap.

As with any program transition of this type, unanticipated issues and problems are inevitable. It is hoped that this change will assist in making this transition smoother and less disruptive for both institutions and A+ eligible students. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact one of the following MDHE staff members:

- Connie Bestgen, program specialist
(800) 473-6757, option 4, (573) 751-1772, or connie.bestgen@dhe.mo.gov
- Amy Haller, program specialist
(573) 526-7958 or amy.haller@dhe.mo.gov
- Kelli Reed, student assistance associate
(573) 751-2444 or kelli.reed@dhe.mo.gov